

# Hānau Kahikikū me Kahikimoe: A Call for the Development of a Theory for Kanaka Maoli Visual Culture Education

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## Introduction

Despite Hawai'i's location at the northern apex of Polynesia, visual arts education in Hawai'i is predominately west facing in its orientation. Defining visual arts solely along European/American conventions and history, arts education as practiced in Hawai'i does little to acknowledge and engage the diversity of cultural perspectives long represented in the islands. Of particular concern has been the exclusion of cultural perspectives of Kanaka Maoli, the indigenous people of Hawai'i, within both the curriculum for art education at the University of Hawai'i and the art curriculum of Hawai'i's public school system.

Owing its existence historically to the works of American and European artists, teachers, and theorists, the field of visual arts education cannot help but reflect the cultural perspectives and values of its founders. For this reason, visual arts education could be forgiven its enthusiastic claim for higher learning through engagement with the visual arts. As an example, the United States National Standards for Arts Education (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994) describes its objectives in this way:

Fine arts cultivate the direct experience of the senses, they trust the unmediated flash of insight as a legitimate source of knowledge. Their goal is to connect person and experience directly, to build the bridge between verbal and nonverbal, between the strictly logical and emotional. (p. 1)

This belief in the positive effect of visual arts study has been particularly cogent in Hawai'i where national developments and projects have been welcomed and adopted in school curriculum and teacher education processes.

Juxtaposed against a history of American colonialism in Hawai'i, the affirmative and beneficial intent of visual arts education practice takes on a less than admirable character.

Despite claims of multicultural representation, visual arts education in Hawai'i has been comprehensively captured within the language, values, and cultural viewpoint of mainstream America. The rich and diverse array of aesthetic objects from Kanaka Maoli and other Pacific societies, produced for spiritual, social, or utilitarian purposes, have been colonized into categories defined by American art perspectives which disregard their original intent and cultural context. With no Kanaka Maoli culture-based curriculum to introduce and engage an indigenous way of knowing and seeing, Hawai'i's teachers and students of art are trained to perceive and represent the world through an introduced colonial lens. Like a cultural Trojan horse, visual arts education in Hawai'i is a subtle yet potent vehicle of assimilation through which the values and aesthetics of the dominant American society are transmitted.

To be relevant and viable in the 21st century, visual arts education in Hawai'i needs to expand beyond its western cultural bias to reflect a more representative sampling of the island's geographic, historic, and cultural realities. As a first step in specifying arts education practices for Hawai'i, students and teachers alike need a process of study that enables authentic engagement with Kanaka Maoli culture while acknowledging the ramifications of colonialism in Hawai'i. What is needed in Hawai'i is an arts policy that acknowledges indigenous visual culture in its social context as much as the introduced heritage of western and American art.

In this paper, I argue for the development of a visual arts curriculum that is grounded in the cultural perspective of Kanaka Maoli. I do this in response to the Hawai'i Department of Education's (1999) western-oriented visual arts curriculum document, *Fine art content standards*. My intention is to promote the expansion of the knowledge foundation for the study of art/visual culture generally and, more specifically, to promote the broader development of a comprehensive theory for Kanaka Maoli education.

## Culture and History

From the Kanaka Maoli view, the islands of Hawai'i are the living offspring of the most ancient of gods/ancestors. For example, the islands of Hawai'i, Maui, and Kaua'i were each born from the sexual union of Papahānaumoku—the female manifestation of earth, and her male partner Wākea, the sky. Several other islands in the Hawaiian Island group were conceived through dalliances that Papahānaumoku and Wākea each had with other lovers. The account of the birthing of the Hawaiian Islands reflects both the Kanaka Maoli belief in the humanness of their gods as well as a deep sense of familial connection to their island home.

The creation of the Kanaka Maoli world is described within the *Kumulipo*, a complex 2000 line genealogical chant that identifies and categorizes all known life in Hawai'i. Composed several centuries ago, the *Kumulipo* connects all living things; from the simple coral polyp to sacred highborn chiefs, through a complex evolutionary progression of kinship. Alongside these creation narratives, Kanaka Maoli have retained numerous accounts of great ancestors who navigated vast stretches of the Pacific to find and settle Hawai'i. Navigators like Laka, Moikeha, and Paoa established the Polynesian cultural seed in Hawai'i from the distant island groups of Tahiti, Ra'iatea, Rarotonga, and Samoa.

At its height, Kanaka Maoli civilization supported an estimated population of nearly 800,000 people (Stannard, 1989). Ocean and land resources, while extensively developed, were carefully monitored to assure consistent and sustainable yields. Social structure, determined by inheritance as well as merit, was rigidly hierarchical. Specialized professions, such as the priesthood and artisan classes, were sustained within the many layers of Kanaka Maoli society. Held together by a comprehensive and integrated belief system of mana and kapu, Kanaka Maoli society was one of the most developed and sophisticated in Polynesia.

The fields of archaeology, anthropology, and art history have been the filters through which Euro-American scholarship constructed its view of much of the non-western world. As a means of determining the maturity and development of a culture, anthropologists, archaeologists, and art historians have often classified selected examples of the aesthetic production from non-western societies as art. Societies whose carving, weaving, personal adornment, or ceramics demonstrated sophisticated and refined formal qualities, as

determined by western values and aesthetics, were equated as being more developed than those whose objects evidenced less facility or detail. It is interesting to note that while classified as art by western standards, non-western visual culture has generally been relegated to the margins of a hierarchy that has favored the artistic expression of European males over everyone else.

Despite the highly metaphorical nature of its oral literature, intense attention to material, technique, and form in visual objects, and the complexity of its dance and music, Kanaka Maoli culture did not produce "art" as defined by the post-Renaissance western world. Prior to European intervention, the Kanaka Maoli culture and language had no equivalent term or practice for the western cultural construction "art." While aesthetics are a vital concern in objects produced by Kanaka Maoli, visual, dance, and musical expressions were specifically designed and produced to meet a function within a social, political, economic, and spiritual context. Unlike western art practices, Kanaka Maoli aesthetic objects were never commodified as rarified trade objects, nor did Kanaka Maoli society ever find the necessity to individually valorize those artists who demonstrated genius through their craft.

By virtue of its interrelated functionality within a socio/political context, the aesthetic production of Kanaka Maoli society would be more accurately described as visual culture than as art. The 'ahu'ula or feather cape, worn by Kanaka Maoli chiefs as part of their regalia, provides an excellent example of Kanaka Maoli visual culture. Sewn from the selected feathers of thousands of native birds, the 'ahu'ula was one of the highest material achievements of Kanaka Maoli society. By virtue of its elegant design, its meticulous construction, and the preciousness of its medium, the 'ahu'ula could easily sit within the definition generally attributed to a work of art. Like some of the greatest examples of artwork of the western world, the 'ahu'ula was more than just an object for aesthetic engagement or commodified trade. The 'ahu'ula functioned as a symbol of the sacredness of the chief who wore it, as well as of the collective identity and mana of the community to which he was responsible. On its own, the 'ahu'ula stands as an exceptionally crafted object of clothing made from rare bird feathers. Within the context of the complexity of a Kanaka Maoli cultural framework, however, the 'ahu'ula signified the godliness of the chief, who stood as

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a living conduit through which the sacred converged with the secular. In contrast to its place as an art object in western culture, the 'ahu'ula was an edifying component within the system of sign/objects that is Kanaka Maoli culture.

The English explorer James Cook chanced upon Hawai'i in 1778 while searching for a sea route that would link the northern Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The decades that followed saw not only the death of Cook, but catastrophically, the eradication of well over 90% of Kanaka Maoli due to introduced foreign disease (Stannard, 1989). The massive death rate in this oral-based society resulted in near cultural collapse and loss of indigenous knowledge. Survivors fell prey to the conversion campaigns of Christian zealots and assimilationist education policies and practices of the colonial government.

The concept of a centralized state, an idea less consolidated in most parts of the Pacific, had taken form in Hawai'i well before contact with Europeans. By the early 1800's, the Kingdom of Hawai'i had established treaty relationships with the United States, as well as several European governments, in an attempt to maintain its sovereignty against the rising tide of western colonialism in the Pacific. This period in Pacific history witnessed an aggressive island grab by European and American interests hungry for resources as well as political and commercial expansion. England and France, the most active of Pacific colonizers, recognized the sovereignty of the Hawaiian kingdom after their forceful attempts to subjugate it. The United States of America, the youngest of the western colonial powers, did not.

In 1893, a small group of non-Hawaiian residents of the sovereign and independent Kingdom of Hawai'i, including citizens of the United States, conspired with John L. Stevens, the United States Minister assigned to the Kingdom, to overthrow the indigenous and lawful government of Hawai'i. In the Apology Resolution (United States Congress, Public Law 103-150, 1993), President Clinton acknowledged that without the active support and intervention of the United States diplomatic and military representatives, the insurrection would have failed for lack of popular support and insufficient arms. The Apology Resolution also acknowledged that Kanaka Maoli "never directly relinquished their claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people or over their national lands to the United States,

either through their monarchy or through a plebiscite or referendum." When Hawai'i was annexed to the United States of America in 1898, it was done so against the will of the Kanaka Maoli people (Silva, 1998). International law was again sidestepped when Hawai'i was finally made the 50th of the American union of states in 1959 (Coffman, 1998). Under American rule, Kanaka Maoli were forced to accept United States citizenship while relinquishing their national identity.

Throughout the last century, Kanaka Maoli endured political and educational policies determined to suppress their culture and assimilate them into mainstream America. The Kanaka Maoli language, as an example, was prohibited from use in schools as well as in all legal and official governmental documentation following the overthrow of the Kingdom. Coupled with the dramatic decline in population due to introduced disease, many feared the complete loss of the Kanaka Maoli language, culture, and people. Symptoms of the cultural and spiritual decline of Kanaka Maoli could be seen in government statistics taken at various times throughout the last century. These records indicate that Kanaka Maoli experienced the highest rates in Hawai'i for suicide, prison incarceration, mental illness, poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, alcoholism, drug abuse, and generational reliance on government welfare assistance (United States Department of the Interior, 1983). Little has changed in the first few years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the 1960's, Kanaka Maoli began movements to confront the unresolved issues of social justice and political autonomy brought about through the American colonization of Hawai'i. In line with these movements, a renaissance of Kanaka Maoli language and cultural practices began which reawakened a strong sense of the aspirations of Kanaka Maoli. Even hula and music, art forms long co-opted to support the interests of the tourist industry in Hawai'i, provided strong vehicles for Kanaka Maoli national expression. Sadly, the contribution of visual artists during this period of cultural resurgence was less evident. Despite earnest attempts by native art organizations to develop a presence in society, Kanaka Maoli visual culture found few avenues of access to museums and galleries, the primary venues of visual arts practice in Hawai'i (K. DeSilva, personal communication, 2001).

The visual arts establishment in Hawai'i could be seen as a citadel of mainstream American cultural values posi-

tioned on top of the multicultural and multiethnic setting of the islands' diverse population. Introduced to Hawai'i by missionaries, merchants, and colonial administrators and educators as a symbol of western/American intellectual superiority and cultural sophistication, the institution of visual arts (i.e., artists, museums, galleries, collectors, and critics) gained international attention with romanticized depictions of Hawai'i's lush landscape and exotic natives. When challenged, the art establishment appeared less than enthusiastic about sharing with Kanaka Maoli, the group that it had long made subject, its privileged position of cultural arbiter. An example of this exclusionary practice can be seen in *Artists of Hawai'i* (Haar & Neogy, 1974; Haar, 1977) and *Artists/Hawai'i* (Clarke, 1996), publications associated with the principal art museum in Honolulu. Published each decade since the 1970's, these volumes were written to recognize and acknowledge Hawai'i's finest artists. In all three, the featured artists are primarily migrants to Hawai'i. None of the artists selected for inclusion are Kanaka Maoli (Kosasa, 1993–1994). Although this paper is intended as a call for the development of Kanaka Maoli visual culture pedagogy, I relate this brief history to reveal the intentional omission of Kanaka Maoli culture from the practice of visual arts in Hawai'i.

## Education

According to Michael Apple (1993, p. 9), "The means and ends involved in educational policy and practice are the results of struggles by powerful groups and social movements to make their knowledge legitimate, to defend or increase their patterns of social mobility, and to increase their power in the larger social arena." Prominent Maori educator Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) expands this idea to include former colony societies like New Zealand and Hawai'i where school curriculum and teaching approaches have preserved dominant colonial interests while serving to domesticate the indigenous peoples.

The University of Hawai'i is the foremost institution of higher learning in Hawai'i. Art education through the Department of Art and the College of Education was established early in the history of the university. These two programs have educated a significant percentage of the artists, designers, and art educators in Hawai'i. Despite its location within one of the most multicultural populations in the world, the study of art at the university has historically

maintained an exclusively eurocentric focus.

One consequence of the privileging of eurocentric art perspectives is that students and teachers produce and discuss art exclusively from the perspective of western art history and aesthetics. For many Kanaka Maoli students interested in embarking on journeys of self-understanding through indigenous visual culture, the university offers few opportunities for such research and study. Kanaka Maoli students who undertake art study at the university are compelled to put aside their indigenous cultural perspectives in order to successfully complete their courses of study (Kosasa, 1998). The recent hiring of a prominent Kanaka Maoli artist in the Department of Art was thought by many to mark the beginning of a new era of cultural inclusiveness within the department. However, the deferment of an initiative to introduce a Kanaka Maoli visual arts program into the department has tempered any optimism and hope for change. This situation illustrates how the imbalance of power at the university threatens to contain and tokenize Kanaka Maoli knowledge while continuing the oppression of indigenous culture in Hawai'i.

Reflecting the west-facing orientation of the University of Hawai'i, the Hawai'i Department of Education, which oversees instruction and administration of all public schools, excludes Kanaka Maoli knowledge and cultural perspectives from the content standards of its art education curriculum (Hawai'i Department of Education, 1999). Kanaka Maoli visual aesthetics and ways of knowing—a knowledge base that extends over a period of nearly two thousand years of cultural development—have become invisible within the curriculum of public schools of Hawai'i. As a result of this exclusion, students of Hawai'i, whether from indigenous or immigrant backgrounds, are denied the opportunity to adopt a cultural perspective and knowledge base that has been shaped by the natural and social environment of Hawai'i.

The exclusion of Kanaka Maoli knowledge and cultural perspectives from the curriculum of public schools also contradicts a body of educational research that encourages the development of culturally relevant curricula and pedagogy to meet the special learning needs of indigenous and multi-ethnic communities (McFarlane, 2004; L. Smith, 1999). This is particularly true in the case of various indigenous and multi-ethnic groups like Kanaka Maoli, who have consistently been disinterested in and unengaged

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by mainstream educational offerings. As an example, in its study of Native Hawaiian education, Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate (1983) concluded that Native Hawaiian students were disadvantaged by mainstream approaches to education. Like Kaupapa Maori theory of Aotearoa/New Zealand (G. Smith, 1997), studies in Kanaka Maoli education have since encouraged the development of a culturally relevant school curriculum designed to support the special learning needs of Kanaka Maoli students (Benham & Heck, 1998; Clark, 2003). Despite a growing amount of statistical evidence attesting to the failure of mainstream education to meet the learning needs of Kanaka Maoli, the Hawai'i Department of Education appears unable or unwilling to shift from its preference for mainstream mono-cultural perspectives and approaches for visual arts education.

The privileging of one race or culture is antithetical to the principles of any democratic, pluralistic society. When considering the place of race and culture in democratic societies, it must be acknowledged that democratic principles are a western cultural construction that favors majority interests in society. Infused throughout western legal, political, commercial, and educational institutions, western cultural values shape the foundations of all democratic societies. So pervasive are these values that they have become normalized and are accepted uncritically as the representative view of democracy. The irony is that democracy cannot avoid discriminating against minority cultures by virtue of its foundation in those western values that privilege the majority. In the United States, the Equal Rights Amendment (Huckabee, 1996) and affirmative action laws (United States Department of Labor, revised January, 2002) contradict the lofty democratic principles of the United States Constitution and attest to the practice of elevating one particular group over others.

In 2000, the Hawai'i State Constitutional Convention led to the amendment of Article 10, Section 4 that now reads *"The State shall provide for a Hawaiian education program consisting of language, culture and history in the public schools."* The existence of this amendment establishes a legal obligation on the part of the state of Hawai'i to provide Kanaka Maoli with a Hawaiian education program. While the case appears clear for

the establishment in Hawai'i of a Kanaka Maoli culture-based visual arts curriculum for public education, pending actions in the U.S. Congress and federal courts could jeopardize any initiative for indigenous education nationally. I acknowledge the need for further research into the legal implications of the Constitutional amendment as it pertains to Kanaka Maoli visual arts education.

Although U.S. government policy recognizes and protects individual rights of U.S. citizens, it does little to protect the collective rights of Kanaka Maoli as an indigenous people. Today, the United States Federal Government and the state of Hawai'i Government are considering their obligations, in the light of pending court and legislative decisions, to support Kanaka Maoli educational initiatives. Conservative voices claim such support would violate federal and state laws that were established to ensure equal treatment to all citizens despite race. Thus the irony of the U.S. Government is revealed—a government that has not only violated its own Constitution by illegally seizing the territory of the independent nation of Hawai'i, but that also hides behind the clauses of that same document when seeking to circumvent any obligation to the indigenous people it has held captive.

With little government support, indigenous education in Hawai'i has progressed and receded with the tide of American politics. In spite of this general lack of government support, Kanaka Maoli have managed to extract a number of favorable legislative concessions over the years which have supported various initiatives for Kanaka Maoli educational initiatives in Hawai'i. Many of these initiatives have benefited both indigenous and immigrant communities in Hawai'i. Today, with comprehensive control of the courts, Congress, and administration in the sway of decision makers uninformed about indigenous issues, all Kanaka Maoli educational initiatives are threatened by an unrelenting onslaught of legal and legislative attacks. Disguised as a campaign to comprehensively end policies of racial preferences in America, these legislative and legal attacks may result in a comprehensive "normalizing" of western cultural views through the complete elimination of ethnic difference in education policy and planning.

## Art Education

Art education, like art, is a western cultural construction. Its aim, according to researcher and author R. A. Smith (1987), is the development of a disposition to appreciate the excellence of art. While noble in aspiration, Smith's stance must be carefully measured in contrast to the social conditions in which they are applied. "Excellence" is a term that is relative to the values and perspectives of the dominant society. Revealed subtly within Smith's statement is the underlying function of art education as a transmission instrument of the political and economic values of the establishment.

### Art and Art Education as Political Instruments

The foundation of western civilization can be traced to ancient Greek philosophy. Both Plato and Aristotle, philosophers whose writings have been among the most influential in shaping western civilization and democracy, wrote authoritatively about the subject of art. Their ideas focused not on art's aesthetic qualities but instead on its impact as a vehicle for social and cultural continuance. Believing the state to be the ultimate medium of social order, Plato (as cited in Cooper & Hutchinson, 1997) considered logic and emotional control the primary mediums by which humans attain true happiness. Plato understood art to be a socially constructed phenomenon with its own politics, economics, and culture. By virtue of its ability to inspire and incite emotion, important elements of social control, Plato and Socrates (as cited in Efland, 1990) both viewed art and art education processes with suspicion.

Unlike Plato and Socrates, Aristotle (as cited in Efland, 1990) valued art as a source of imitation and representation of nature. Aristotle believed the strong emotional responses in people that art inspired was a benefit rather than a threat to social order. To Aristotle, the arts provided an appropriate setting through which to purge and eliminate emotions that could prove damaging if, unrestrained, they were allowed to manifest themselves within society. Regardless of their differences of opinion, however, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle each appeared to recognize the role of art in helping powerful groups to maintain social order and political control. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century Papal commissions of Michelangelo's works, to the public spectacles of the Nazi party in the 1930's, the practice of harnessing art and art

education as a means of social control appears a consistent theme in the history of western civilization.

### Art and Art Education as Economic Instrument

The historical progression of scientific and technical developments brought about by the Industrial Revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century dramatically altered the course of western society. By transforming material production, the factory supplanted the artisan's workshop as the primary site of product manufacture. Through industrial processes, laborers with few skills or training could produce far more than those skilled artisans who trained for years to master a craft. The result of this increase in industrial production was a far greater distribution of goods throughout society than was ever previously experienced. Yet, in spite of the efficiencies of mechanized production, mass produced goods often lacked quality, as they often sacrificed aesthetic quality to functionality. Ironically, this criticism was made of English products exhibited and promoted during the Great Crystal Palace Exposition of 1851 (Efland, 1990). English products of industry, though produced by the most advanced manufacturing technology in the world, were judged inferior in design and aesthetics to the products of French and German manufacture. Poor design and characterless aesthetic considerations resulted in English industry losing its share of the increasingly competitive global market of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Acting quickly to protect their interests, governments and industry throughout Western Europe, recognizing art and design as vital to the commercial interests of industry, quickly established national schools for art and design studies. Distinguished from the study of fine arts, schools of art and design offered vocationally-oriented classes that trained students to produce art/design for commercial purposes and applications. This goal of making art education relevant to industry had a large impact on the arts curricula for schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, art education today, has inherited from the Industrial Revolution, the idea of art as an economic instrument and the idea that works of art and art teaching processes should support the commercial and industrial interests of society.

### Art Education as an Instrument of Indigenous Culture?

German essayist and critic Walter Benjamin (1973) described the place of art in primitive (non-western) societies as providing the primary elements, by way of ritual and

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ceremony, which affirmed for individuals, a recognition of communal or tribal membership. Benjamin's insightful description contrasts markedly with the place of art in contemporary western society, in which art is detached from the creation of social meaning and connection among communities of people. The separation of ritual and art instigated by the rise of technology introduced the idea of art as a commodity. Within this context, the practice of art education furthered the separation of art from the process of constructing cultural meaning within societies, tribes, and nations. Thus, art education, within the context of mainstream education, lost its potential to be an instrument of cultural transmission and cultural creation.

It is here that a curriculum for Kanaka Maoli visual culture can make a significant contribution to the learning experiences of students in Hawai'i, both indigenous people and settlers alike. Prior to western colonization, objects of visual culture served as instruments of Kanaka Maoli values and communal identity. Whether for the purposes of ritual, signification, or utility, Kanaka Maoli visual culture was created over the centuries as a response to a variety of environmental, socio-political, religious/spiritual, or economic conditions. The evolving forms of objects or images produced provided for Kanaka Maoli a visual connection to their cultural past—to genealogy, cultural narratives, and values which sustained and supported their sense of national identity. Kanaka Maoli visual culture today maintains its function of linking contemporary society with the ancestral realm. While it is imperative that indigenous students in Hawai'i are provided with learning experiences that recognize and reflect their cultural perspectives and histories, it is also true that non-indigenous students should be offered opportunities to engage authentically with Kanaka Maoli culture and ways of knowing. It is only through experiencing educational opportunities designed from a Kanaka Maoli perspective that a genuine foundation for cross cultural understandings in Hawai'i can occur. An 'ōlelo no'eau (Pukui, 1983, p. 24) or Kanaka Maoli proverb best summarizes the need for inclusion of knowledge from a diversity of sources and cultures in order to enhance learning and teaching within an increasingly globalized context.

'A'ohē pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okāhi.

## Conclusion

Decisions about curriculum content and design for visual arts education in Hawai'i ultimately rest with the state government. While the current practice of visual arts education in Hawai'i aligns well with state and national policies and standards, it does little to recognize teaching and learning from a specifically Hawaiian perspective; particularly that of the indigenous Kanaka Maoli culture.

Approaches to learning and teaching imported from the United States have generally been unsuccessful in effectively engaging Kanaka Maoli students, as evidenced by their consistently poor performance in Hawai'i's schools. To improve this difficult situation, teachers and student educators in Hawai'i need educational strategies and policies that embrace and celebrate a Kanaka Maoli world view. By making curricular knowledge relevant to their cultural outlook, Kanaka Maoli students will more than likely improve their educational performance and involvement in schools (Benham & Heck, 1998; Clark, 2003). Additionally, by infusing culturally-appropriate learning and teaching processes with courses at the University of Hawai'i, College of Education, student teachers will be equipped to develop and apply strategies that encourage Kanaka Maoli learning.

The proposal to develop a theory for Kanaka Maoli visual culture studies provides one such opportunity to expand the knowledge base by contributing to the broader development of a comprehensive theory for Kanaka Maoli and indigenous education. A curriculum for Kanaka Maoli visual culture education cannot help but invite further questions about the future of Kanaka Maoli education generally. What is the aim of Kanaka Maoli education, and who is its intended beneficiary? Is the current Hawai'i public school system the most appropriate vehicle and environment for Kanaka Maoli knowledge? With curriculum development and teacher education processes so strongly associated with national standards, will space be allotted in public education in Hawai'i for Kanaka Maoli knowledge? If allotted space within mainstream curricula, will Kanaka Maoli knowledge be marginalized within an education culture that privileges western knowledge? If mainstream education is not the best vehicle for the learning of Kanaka Maoli knowledge, what structure best suits the teaching and learning needs of Kanaka Maoli education? These are some of the myriad of questions raised by the proposal

to introduce a Kanaka Maoli theory for visual culture education.

For the past 30 years, New Zealand has developed a range of models from Maori education that can be drawn upon to inform the development of Kanaka Maoli visual culture education for schools and teacher education. From the separatist project of Maori culture-centered institutions such as the Kura Kaupapa and Wananga to the socially integrated bi-cultural provision of the national school curriculum, Maori art/visual culture enjoys multiple academic venues through which it can be explored and expressed. Sadly, far fewer options for Kanaka Maoli education appear to be available. Because of this, research is needed to develop curriculum and pedagogy for Kanaka Maoli visual culture education to support a more appropriate array of educational options and venues that will impart indigenous knowledge and aid in the revitalization of the Hawaiian culture.

It is my hope that art education practices in Hawai'i can expand beyond the limitations and biases of the present curriculum document and position Kanaka Maoli cultural perspectives in equal standing to those of the west. By doing so, Hawai'i will shape an educational process through arts education that genuinely reflects its unique history and identity as the homeland of the Kanaka Maoli.

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